Proposal to increase freedom fighters pension

1930. DR. SHYAM SUNDAR MOHAPATRA : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to State whether Government are considering to increase the pension of old freedom fighters who were in the Andaman jail ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATES (SHRI P. A. SANGMA) : No such proposal is under consideration

Indian steps to improve relations with Pakistan Afghanistan and Nepal

1931. SHRI RAMSINGBHAI PATALIYABHAI RATHVAKOLI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government of India have taken a number of positive steps to improve relations with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal from the 1st January, 1984 to 15th November, 1985 ;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof ;

(c) what is the reaction and response of these countires to Indian steps ; and

(d) what is the outcome thereby?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI B. R. BHAGAT) : (a) to (d) Improvement of relations with foreign countries is a continuous process. In this context Government of India have been making contant efforts to improve relations particularly with neighbouring countries. Following are some of the major steps taken in respect of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal :

Pakistan : India is committed to developing cordial cooperative and good neighbourly relations with Pakistan in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Simla Agreement. Following the first meeting of Indo-Joint Commission, which is establsihed at the initiative of India the sub-commissions met in New Delhi in January, 1984 to review the progress. A number of proposals were for made widening people-to-people contracts through cultural exchanges, removal of travel restrictions, exchange of books newspapers and periodicals and non-discriminatory trade relations. Unfortunately Pakistan's response to these proposals has been restrictive

A second meeting of the Indo-Pak Joint Commission was held in July, 1985. Some of the important decisions taken at the meeting were : (a) signing of the agreement on cooperation in agricultural research; (b) agreeing on the text of the draft cultural cooperation agreement; (c) drawing up of proposals for the forthcoming year; (d) waiver of requirement of police reporting in respect of bonafide businessmen and holders of transit visas; (e) commencement of through railway booking facilities between designated railway stations; (f) exchange of information to check trafficking in narcotics. However, no progress was made in regard to development of bilateral trade.

The Prime Minister has met President Zia from time to time, recently in New York on October, 23 and later in Oman. Meetings at other levels both Ministerial and Official have also been taking place from time to time.

Afghanistan : Following PM's initiative to improve India's relations with neighbouring countries, the Foreign Secretary paid a visit to Kabul in April 1985. He had a useful exchange of views with the Afghan leaders. During this visit, it was decided to hold the seventh session of the Indo-Afghan Joint Commission on Economic, Trade and Tech-

nical Cooperation at the Ministerial level. This was highly appreciated by Afghanistan as the 6th session of the Joint Commission had been held only at the level of the officials.

The seventh session of the Joint Commission at the Ministerial level was held in New Delhi in August, 1985. India agreed to the Afghan request for economic and technical assistance in the fields of Public Health, Industrial Development, etc. Follow up measures have already been initiated. During the Joint Commission meeting, the two sides also signed a Cultural Exchange Programme for 1985—87.

There have been regular discussions between India and Afghanistan on trade matters during 1984 and 1985. Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding on Trade has been signed. It is expected that Indian exports to Afghanistan will increase as a result of this.

Nepal : A number of visits have been exchanged between India and Nepal, keeping up a dialogue on matters of mutual interest. Thus, the Foreign Minister of Nepal visited India in July 1984, the Foreign Secretary visited Nepal in April, 1985 which was followed by the visit of Shri Shiv Shankar, MP to Nepal in July 1985 as Prime Minister's Special Envoy. The King of Nepal visited India in September, 1985 and held extensive discussions with the Prime Minister and other Union Ministers. Secretary (ER) also subsequently visited Nepal in November, 1985 in connection with the construction of the western end of the East-West Highways.

A number of steps were taken in the field of economic cooperation and assistance. A panel of names for consultants for the Karnali Hydel Project was jointly proposed by India and Nepal to the World Bank for approval in 1985. The Transit Treaty giving Nepal the right of transit for imports and exports through India was extended from March, 1985 to December, 1985. The Devighat 14-MW Hydel Project built with Indian assistance of Rs. 42.818 crores was inaugurated in March by the King of Nepal. An agreement for renovation and extension of Chandra Canal at a cost of Rs. 19 crores was reached in October, 1984. India took up the expansion of OPD of Bir Hospital, Kathmandu in June 1984. In August, 1985 Agreements were concluded with Nepal to electrify 76 villages in Nepal at a cost of Rs. 4 crores. A Museum Library-cum-Documentation Centre will be set up at the Institute of Forestry in Hitauda at a cost of Rs. 2.6 crores.

In September, 1985 an agreement was concluded with Nepal for provision of Rs. 50 crores to assist Nepal to build the 200 KM section at the Western End of the East-West Highway.

Visits of Indian and Pakistan Delegations to others Country

1932. SHRI RAMSINGBHAI PATALIYABHAI RATHVAKOLI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be peased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of official delegations and Ministers from India and Pakistan visited others' country during the 1st January, 1985 to 15th November, 1985 and held discussions on many bilateral issues ;

(b) if so, the names and the status of such delegations and Minister ;

(c) the details of discussions held and the assurances given by each other ; and

(d) the outcome thereof ?